From Wet to Dry and Back Again: The ecology of domesticating and intensifying early rice in the Lower Yangtze

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THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 3:00 PM, IN CRAWFORD HALL 115

An exploration of the journey of wild rice cultivated on the wetland margins at 6000BC through early domestication and the trajectory of the first arable systems from farming in wet dug out fields from c.4000 BC to fully developed irrigated paddy fields in the Lower Yangtze Valley. Investigations of associated rice weed flora across a range of arable systems reveal how rice cultivation changed over time. Multivariate analysis of archaeobotanical data, phytoliths and macro remains from traditionally farmed fields are used to create modern analogues of ancient systems which are then applied to archaeobotanical samples to interpret the spread of wet rice.

Alison Weisskopf is an archaeobotanist, currently the phytolith specialist on the 'Impact of Evolving Rice Systems from China to South East Asia' project, exploring the origins, development and spread of rice agriculture across Asia at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. She has worked in East, Southeast and South Asia on this project and its earlier incarnation, the Early Rice project, and also in Fiji, the Eurasian steppes, Belize, Malta and the UK. Her main interests are human plant use in prehistory, food pathways, ethnobotany and economic botany and the relationships between plant use and trading patterns and social development.

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